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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/699,158	10/30/2003	Ralf Zuber	13574 US	1631
23719	7590	07/28/2006	EXAMINER	
KALOW & SPRINGUT LLP 488 MADISON AVENUE 19TH FLOOR NEW YORK, NY 10022			WILLS, MONIQUE M	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			1745	

DATE MAILED: 07/28/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

DETAILED ACTION

Information Disclosure Statement

The information disclosure statements filed December 6, 2004 has/have been received and complies with the provisions of 37 CFR 1.97, 1.98 and MPEP § 609.

Accordingly, the information disclosure statement(s) is/are being considered by the examiner, and an initial copied is attached herewith.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

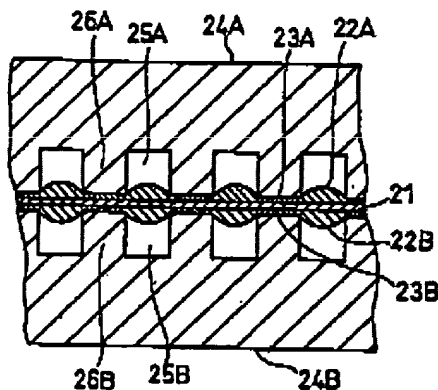
A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

Claims 1-7 & 12-15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Shibata et al. U.S. Pub. 2004/0058223.

With respect to claim 1, Shibata teaches a membrane electrode unit for electrochemical equipment, containing: an ionically conductive membrane (par. 51) with a front and back side, a first catalyst layer (2A) and a first gas distributor substrate (3A) on the front side and a second catalyst layer (2B) and a second gas distributor substrate (3B) on the back side, in which the first gas distributor substrate has lesser surface dimensions than the ionically conductive membrane and the second gas distributor substrate has essentially the same surface dimensions as the ionically conductive membrane. See Fig. 3.

F I G. 3



In re claim 2, the catalyst layer on the front side and the catalyst layer on the back side of the ionically conductive membrane have different surface dimensions. See Figure 3.

In re claim 3, the catalyst layer on the front side and the catalyst layer on the back side of the ionically conductive membrane have the same surface dimensions.

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With respect to claim 5, the catalyst contains platinum noble metals (par. 49).

With respect to claim 6, the ionically conductive membrane comprises organic polymers, such as proton-conducting perfluorinated polymeric sulfonic acid compounds and has a thickness of 51 microns (par. 51).

As to claim 7, the gas distributor substrate comprises porous electrically conductive materials containing carbon fiber non-woven cloth (par. 44).

With respect to claims 12-15, the claims are process limitations in product claims. The claims are in product by process form. "[E]ven though product-by-process claims are limited by and defined by the process, determination of patentability is based on the product itself. The patentability of a product does not depend on its method of production. If the product in the product-by-process claim is the same as or obvious from a product of the prior art, the claim is unpatentable even though the prior product was made by a different process." In re Thorpe, 777 F.2d 695, 698, 227 USPQ 964, 966 (Fed. Cir. 1985). Therefore, the limitations of claims 12-15 are met because the structure taught by Shibata.

Therefore, the Shibata anticipates the instant claims.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 16-17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claims 16-17 provides for the use of a membrane electrode unit, but, since the claim does not set forth any steps involved in the method/process, it is unclear what method/process applicant is intending to encompass. A claim is indefinite where it merely recites a use without any active, positive steps delimiting how this use is actually practiced.

Claims 16-17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed recitation of a use, without setting forth any steps involved in the process, results in an improper definition of a process, i.e., results in a claim which is not a proper process claim under 35 U.S.C. 101. See for example *Ex parte Dunki*, 153 USPQ 678 (Bd.App. 1967) and *Clinical Products, Ltd. v. Brenner*, 255 F. Supp. 131, 149 USPQ 475 (D.D.C. 1966).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 8-11 rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shibata et al. U.S. Pub. 2004/0058223 as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Lertola U.S. Pub. 2005/0255372.

Shibata teaches a membrane electrode assembly, but is silent to a seal surrounding the gas distribution substrate (claim 8) that is impregnated at the edge region to a depth of 1mm (claim 9) made from specific thermoplastic polymers (claim 10) combined with a plastic frame (claim 11).

However, Lertola teaches a membrane electrode assembly with first and second gas diffusion backing having sealing edges (claim 8). See the abstract. The seal is impregnated into the sealing edges (claim 9) and made of high-density polyethylene (claim 10). See paragraphs 33 & 96. The seal also includes a peripheral frame (claim 11). See paragraph 78.

Shibata and Lertola are analogous art from the same field of endeavor, namely fabricating membrane electrode assemblies having first and second gas diffusion layers and catalyst.

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Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time the instant invention was made, to apply the seal assembly of Lertola, to the membrane electrode assembly of Shibata, in order to provide fluid impermeable seals.

Conclusion

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Brunk et al. U.S. Pub. 2005/0100776 teaches a unitized membrane electrode assembly and process for its preparation.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the Examiner should be directed to Monique Wills whose telephone number is (571) 272-1309. The Examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday from 8:30am to 5:00 pm.

If attempts to reach Examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the Examiner's supervisor, Patrick Ryan, may be reached at 571-272-1292. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR.

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Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

MW

7/20/06

MARK RUTHKOSKY
PRIMARY EXAMINER

Mark Ruthkosky
7.24.2006